

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4334
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

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ALSO FOR USEEC

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, BE
SUBJECT: STUYVENBERG - ONE STEP CLOSER TO A FEDERAL
BELGIUM -

REF: A) 77 BRUSSELS A-232, B) 77 BRUSSELS 5242

1. SUMMARY: THE COMMITTEE OF 15, APPOINTED TO "FILL
IN THE BLANKS" IN THE HASTILY-DRAWN COMMUNITIES ACCORD
CONCLUDED AT EGMONT LAST MAY, COMPLETED ITS MONTHS-LONG
DELIBERATIONS AT STUYVENBERG PALACE ON JANUARY 17. THE
ORIGINAL ACCORD EMERGED FROM THESE TALKS WITH ONLY
MINIMAL CHANGE - TO ALL APPEARANCES A FRANCOPHONE
TRIUMPH, DESPITE THE FACT THAT ALL COALITION PARTY
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PRESIDENTS, BOTH FLEMING AND WALLOON, DECLARE THAT
THERE WERE "NO VICTORS, NO VANQUISHED" AT STUYVENBERG.
THESE PARTY PRESIDENTS - THE REAL MOTIVE FORCE
BEHIND EGMONT, STUYVENBERG AND THE PRESENT TINDEMANS
GOVERNMENT- APPEAR THUS TO HAVE TAKEN BELGIUM ONE
SIGNIFICANT STEP CLOSER TO A FEDERAL STATE.
END SUMMARY.

2. CLIMAXING A MARATHON NEGOTIATING SESSION - ONE OF SEVERAL SINCE IT BEGAN ITS WORK LAST SEPTEMBER - BELGIUM'S COMMITTEE OF FIFTEEN (REF "A") ANNOUNCED AT 0215 HOURS JANUARY 17 THAT IT HAD RESOLVED THE POLITICAL DIFFERENCES WHICH HAD DELAYED AGREEMENT ON THE TEXT OF A BILL TO IMPLEMENT THE MAY 24, 1977 EGMONT ACCORD (REF "B"). AS ANTICIPATED, THE THORNIEST ASPECT OF THE NEGOTIATIONS WAS THE QUESTION OF BRUSSELS AND ITS PERIPHERY. AGREEMENT ON ALL OF THE POLITICALLY SENSITIVE ISSUES HAVING BEEN ACHIEVED, STATE SECRETARIES FOR INSTITUTIONAL REFORM HOYAUX (FRANCOPHONE) AND DE BONDY (FLEMING) HAVE BEEN CHARGED WITH DEVELOPING A SINGLE LEGAL TEXT FOR REVIEW AND FINAL APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE BEFORE IT IS SUBMITTED TO PARLIAMENT, PROBABLY BEFORE MID-YEAR.

3. IN BROAD SUMMARY, THE SALIENT FEATURES OF THE AGREEMENT ARE AS FOLLOWS:

A. COMMUNITIES. THE ACTIVITIES OF THE DUTCH AND FRANCOPHONE COMMUNITY COUNCILS WILL BE FUNDED AT A RATE OF INCREASE PARALLEL TO INCREASES IN FUNDING FOR THE REGIONS. THE COMMUNITY EXECUTIVES WILL CONSIST OF FOUR MEMBERS EACH, NAMED BY THE KING WITH THE CONCURRENCE OF THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL CONCERNED. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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B. PROVINCES/SUB-REGIONS. THE PROVINCES WILL DISAPPEAR AS POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS, REPLACED BY 25 SUB-REGIONS - 11 IN FLANDERS, 13 IN WALLONIA AND 1 IN BRUSSELS. THE SUB-REGIONS WILL INHERIT THE GENERAL FUNCTIONS OF THE INTERCOMMUNAL ADMINISTRATIONS. OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES MAY BE DELEGATED TO THE SUB-REGIONS BY THE COMMUNES AND THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. EACH SUB-REGION WILL HAVE ITS OWN COUNCIL AND EXECUTIVE. ELECTIONS TO THE SUB-REGIONAL COUNCILS WILL BE HELD CONCURRENTLY WITH THE COMMUNAL ELECTIONS.

C. GERMANOPHONES. THE EASTERN CANTONS OCCUPIED BY THE GERMAN-SPEAKING COMMUNITY WILL CONSTITUTE A SUB-REGION LINKED TO THE GERMANOPHONE CULTURAL COUNCIL WHICH WILL BE EMPOWERED TO REGULATE CULTURAL AFFAIRS BY DECREE.

D. THE BRUSSELS PERIPHERY. THE RIGHT OF FRANCOPHONES RESIDENT IN SIX COMMUNES ADJACENT TO THE CAPITAL TO SECURE CERTAIN ADDITIONAL LINGUISTIC, CULTURAL AND OTHER PRIVILEGES BY ELECTING FICTIONAL RESIDENCE

IN ONE OF BRUSSELS' 19 BI-LINGUAL COMMUNES IS ASSURED,
WITH NO LIMIT IN TIME. THE SAME RIGHT IS PROVIDED
FRANCOPHONES RESIDENT IN THE REMAINDER OF THE PERIPHERAL
COMMUNES (THE EGMONT COMMUNES AND DISTRICTS), BUT THIS
RIGHT WILL EXPIRE IN 1998. THE CHILDREN OF FRANCOPHONES
IN THESE "EGMONT COMMUNES" WILL HAVE THE OPTION OF
ATTENDING FRENCH-SPEAKING SCHOOLS IN THE SIX COMMUNES.

THE FLEMISH COUNTERPART TO THE FRANCOPHONE "RIGHT
OF INSCRIPTION" IS THE GUARANTEE THAT IN EACH OF THE
19 BRUSSELS COMMUNES, AS WELL AS IN THE SIX PERIPHERAL

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COMMUNES, FLEMISH MINORITIES WILL BE ASSURED OF A
DUTCH-SPEAKING COMMUNITY COMMITTEE ENDOWED WITH A
FIXED MINIMUM LEVEL OF FUNDING.

4. COMMENTS. DESPITE WHAT APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN SOME
FAIRLY BRISK LAST MINUTE BARGAINING LED BY FLEMISH
SOCIAL CHRISTIAN SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INSTITUTIONAL
REFORM FRANK DE BONDT, THE EGMONT BLUEPRINT FOR
DEFINITIVE REGIONALIZATION EMERGED FROM THE STUYVENBERG
TALKS WITH SURPRISINGLY FEW SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES. THE
CREATION OF SUB-REGIONS AND THE GRANTING OF REGULATORY

POWERS TO THE GERMANOPHONE CULTURAL COUNCIL FILLED TWO OBVIOUS "BLANKS" IN THE EGMONT ACCORD WITHOUT CAUSING SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES. THE MAJOR THRUST OF THE FLEMISH EFFORT APPEARS, HOWEVER, TO HAVE BEEN TO CIRCUMSCRIBE MORE CLOSELY THE "RIGHT OF INSCRIPTION" LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FOR FRANCOPHONES RESIDENT IN THE FLEMISH COMMUNES ON THE BRUSSELS PERIPHERY. THERE THEY SUCCEEDED ONLY IN PLACING A 20-YEAR LIMIT ON THIS RIGHT - AND ONLY IN THE SO-CALLED EGMONT COMMUNES. MOREOVER, THIS SINGLE FRANCOPHONE CONCESSION WAS COMPENSATED, IN PART AT LEAST, BY THE RIGHT EXTENDED TO FRANCOPHONE CHILDREN RESIDENT IN THESE AREAS TO ATTEND FRENCH-SPEAKING SCHOOLS IN THE NEIGHBORING SIX FLEMISH COMMUNES WITH FRENCH LANGUAGE FACILITIES. ALTHOUGH THE FRANCOPHONE COMMUNITY SEEMS TO HAVE MAINTAINED VIRTUALLY INTACT THE CONCESSIONS WON AT EGMONT, THE COALITION PARTY PRESIDENTS WERE UNANIMOUS IN EXPRESSING THE CONVICTION THAT THERE WERE "NO VICTORS, NO VANQUISHED" AT STUYVENBERG.

5. AS SIGNIFICANT PERHAPS FOR THE FUTURE OF BELGIUM AS THE CONSTITUTION OF 1830, DEFINITIVE REGIONALIZATION - IF AND WHEN IT IS FINALLY INSTALLED - WILL NOT HAVE BEEN, PROPERLY SPEAKING, AN ACHIEVEMENT EITHER OF GOVERNMENT OR PARLIAMENT BUT OF A COALITION OF PARTY LEADERS. THEIR SUCCESSES - FIRST AT EGMONT, NOW AT STUYVENBERG - HAVE DEFIED NOT ONLY THE HARD-LINING ZEALOTS IN BOTH LINGUISTIC CAMPS, BUT ALSO THE PESSIMISM AND RESERVE OF MANY WELL-PLACED BELGIANS OF GOOD WILL, INCLUDING THE PRIME MINISTER HIMSELF. IRONICALLY, HOWEVER, IT MAY BE TINDEMANS RATHER THAN PARTY PRESIDENTS MARTENS (CVP), COOLS (PSB), AND SCHILTZ (VU) WHO WILL BE REMEMBERED AS THE FATHER OF WHAT WILL BE, IF ALL CONTINUES TO GO WELL, A NEW BELGIAN STATE. CHAMBERS

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